

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0974

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: SHUM, SN

SUBJECT: 1978 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

REF: (A) STATE 215801, (B) SINGAPORE A-61, (C) SINGAPORE A-74,

(D) SINGAPORE A-101, (E) SINGAPORE A-108, (F) SINGAPORE

A-35, (G) SINGAPORE 3673

1. POST BELIEVES 1977 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT ON SINGAPORE STILL VALID. MORE RECENT OVERVIEW ON HUMAN RIGHTS PROVIDED REF (C). SUMMARY OF CURRENT STATUS OF POLITICAL DETAINEES IS CONTAINED IN REF (E). FOLLOWING COMMENTS ARE SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH REF (A).

2. POINTS A AND B: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON SINGAPORE'S RECORD IN MEETING BASIC HUMAN NEEDS OF ITS POPULATION, INCLUDING QUANTIFICATION, WAS SUBMITTED IN REFS (C) AND (D). ATTENTION TO IMPROVING LOT OF THE POOR IS DEMONSTRATED BY FLAT S\$12 MONTHLY INCREASE IN NATIONAL WAGE COUNCIL GUIDELINES WHICH WAS DESIGNED TO INCREASE INCOME OF LOWEST WAGE EARNERS (AND EASE SHORTAGE OF BLUE COLLAR WORKERS). AVERAGE MONTHLY WAGE IN SINGAPORE IN 1977 WAS S\$422; PROGRESSIVE INCOME TAX BEGINS AT S\$500 PER MONTH.

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3. POINT C: ANALYSIS OF SITUATION OF MIGRANT WORKERS, IF THIS TO BE INCLUDED UNDER "LABOR RIGHTS," WAS PROVIDED IN REF (B). NOT PREVIOUSLY REPORTED TO POST'S KNOWLEDGE IS EXISTENCE OF PRESIDENTIAL COUNCIL FOR MINORITY RIGHTS WHICH REVIEWS ALL LEGISLATION PASSED BY PARLIAMENT TO ENSURE THAT IT DOES NOT

DISCRIMINATE AGAINST MINORITY GROUPS. COUNCIL IS CHAIRED BY CHIEF JUSTICE, AND ITS TWELVE MEMBERS INCLUDE THE PRIME MINISTER, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, FOREIGN MINISTER, ATTORNEY GENERAL, AND HEAD OF MOSLEM RELIGIOUS COUNCIL (MAJLIS UGAMA). SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT'S PROLONGED, GENERALLY SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS TO OVERCOME RACIAL BIAS OF ETHNIC CHINESE MAJORITY AND TO PROVIDE LEGAL/SOCIAL EQUALITY FOR MINORITY MALAY COMMUNITY ARE DESCRIBED IN REF (G). WE HAVE NOT REPORTED MUCH ON STATUS OF WOMEN IN SINGAPORE BECAUSE NO HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM IS INVOLVED; WOMEN ENJOY FULL PANOPLY OF LEGAL RIGHTS INCLUDING SUCH ITEMS AS ABORTION ON DEMAND. LET US KNOW IF FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS SUBJECT NEEDED.

4. POINT D: LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS DESCRIBED IN REF (C). AS REPORTED IN REF (E) IN CONTEXT OF DEFAMATION CASES AGAINST POLITICAL OPPOSITION, PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS ACT EFFECTIVE APRIL 1, 1978 PROVIDES THAT "NO PERSON WHO IS AN UNDISCHARGED BANKRUPT SHALL TAKE PART IN ANY ELECTION ACTIVITY." ALSO REPORTED IN SEVERAL MESSAGES WAS FACT THAT "SUTIABILITY CERTIFICATES" NO LONGER REQUIRED FOR ADMISSION TO UNIVERSITY.

5. POINT F: PRIME MINISTER LEE'S STATEMENT THAT ANY INTERROGATING OFFICER WHO ASSAULTS A DETAINEE IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LIABLE TO CIVIL AND CRIMINAL CHARGES (FEBRUARY 24TH ISSUE OF FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW) WAS REPORTED IN REF (F).

6. TREATMENT OF DETAINEES. LAWYER FOR SEVERAL DETAINEES AND WIFE OF ONE OF THEM TOLD EMBOFF THAT AMOUNT OF FOOD WHICH MAY BE BROUGHT FROM OUTSIDE FOR DETAINEES HAS BEEN DECREASED. HOWEVER BOTH SAY PRISON DIET MORE THAN ADEQUATE, AND FOOD BROUGHT FROM OUTSIDE ONLY LUXURIES. WIFE ALSO SAID SHE HAD BEEN ALLOWED TO VISIT HUSBAND ON HIS BIRTHDAY IN ADDITION TO REGULAR WEEKLY VISIT, AND THAT SHE WAS PERMITTED TO BUY HIM ALARM WRISTWATCH SO THAT HE COULD WAKEN FOR NIGHT MEALS DURING MOSLEM FASTING MONTH.
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